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2007-05846/

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For Immediate Release
2007FOR0109-000993
Aug. 2, 2007

Ministry of Forests and Range
Greater Vancouver Regional District

WILDFIRE PROTECTION PLANS BENEFIT COMMUNITIES

VANCOUVER – Nine municipalities in the Greater Vancouver Regional District have successfully completed plans aimed at minimizing the risk of property damage from interface wildfires, with assistance from the provincial government.

"These plans are an important step towards increased public safety," said Rich Coleman, Minister of Forests and Range. "The municipalities have shown great leadership in preparing these plans, and the Province is pleased to have provided financial and technical assistance towards their completion."

"While the risk of summer interface fires is not as great here as it is in the rest of the Province, the consequences can very well be as serious," said District of North Vancouver Mayor Richard Walton. "Our District council and staff are taking a proactive approach to educate the public regarding the risks associated with interface fires and what we, as a community, can do to help reduce the risk."

The plans, known as Community Wildfire Protection Plans, identify the fire hazards in and adjacent to communities, and propose a wildfire hazard reduction strategy focused on higher-risk areas of the community. The plans include a public education component to encourage homeowners to adopt FireSmart construction and landscaping principles.

Greater Vancouver municipalities that have completed plans are Lions Bay, Bowen Island, West Vancouver, District of North Vancouver, Coquitlam, Village of Anmore, Belcarra, Port Moody and Pitt Meadows.

With the plans complete, the participating municipalities will now consider a range of activities to reduce wildfire hazard along the forest/urban interface. Potential hazard reduction techniques include building and home protection, communication and education, vegetation management planning, and improved emergency response for firefighters, as well as training initiatives. Selected activities will be demonstrated to the community in small-scale pilot projects, with further financial support from the Province.

With the plans complete, the participating municipalities will now prepare small-scale pilot projects to demonstrate wildfire hazard reduction techniques, for example, thinning, spacing and pruning trees on public land. The pilot projects allow communities to test approaches before larger-scale implementation.

The Community Wildfire Protection Program is funded by the provincial government and is administered by the Union of British Columbia Municipalities. Under this program, municipalities can apply for funding toward the development of their plans. The Ministry of Forests and Range also provides mapping data and fuel reduction expertise.

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Mitigating interface fire risks through such planning activities was a recommendation of the Filmon Firestorm Review of 2004. To date, 80 local governments across B.C. have completed plans.

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